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ABSTRACT

Two national surveys (one administered to 18,129 students in 1973 and the other administered to 15,432 students in 1983) collected data concerning such indicators of the career development of junior and senior high school students as reactions to career guidance services and career planning involvement. Whereas 78 percent of the 11th graders would have liked help with career planning in 1973, only 71 percent desired such help in 1983. Sixty-six percent of the 11th graders responding in 1983 reported receiving "some" or "a lot of" help with career planning as opposed to only 50 percent 10 years earlier. Although significantly more of the 1983 respondents realized that persons do not tend to remain in one job for their entire working lives, more than half of the 8th and 11th graders polled in 1983 were under the misconception that the earlier individuals choose a career the better. The percentage of students aspiring to careers in the personal, social, and health occupations decreased from 31 percent in 1973 to 13 percent for 8th graders and from 27 percent to 14 percent for 11th graders. Although students are apparently receiving more help with career planning, fewer students were "fairly sure" of their first career choice in 1983 than in 1973. (Seven tables are appended to this report). (MN)

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Ten Years of Student Career Development: A Nationwide Study[1]

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> Student-expressed need for help with career planning is in sharp contrast to the amount of help students feel they receive. . . . These vantage points for viewing student career development--what students say, do, and know--provide a consistent and dismal picture. If we were speaking of physical development rather than career development, we would describe American youth as hungry, undernourished, and physically retarded. (p. 103)

So concluded a summary of results for the first Nationwide Study of Student Career Development (Prediger, Roth, & Noeth, 1974). That 1973 study, conducted when career education and related career guidance services were just beginning to receive national emphasis, provides baseline data for assessing change after a decade of career education/guidance efforts in the nation's schools.

The purpose of this report is to present national data collected 10 years after the baseline data and to summarize changes in several indicators of student career development. The indicators, based on surveys of junior and senior high school students, include career-related concerns, reactions to career guidance services, and career planning involvement. After a brief description of the 1973 and 1983 surveys (18,129 and 15,432 students, respectively), highlights in trends occurring during the "career education decade" are noted.

Integration of study results with the results of other large-scale studies of student career development (e.g., Fetters, Brown, & Owings, 1984; National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1981) is left to the reader, as are judgments regarding study implications. As part of this AACD convention program, Harold Engen will discuss the nation's career education/guidance efforts over the past 10 years, and David Jepsen and Kenneth Hoyt will provide their views on the implications of study results for current practices and national policy. Views and comments from persons in the audience will be welcomed.

1973 Survey

Instrument

All questions ("items") in the 1973 and 1983 phases of the 10-year study were drawn from the Assessment of Career Development (ACD) a 267-item, 11-scale instrument developed by the American College Testing Program (ACT). The rationale, construction, and psychometric characteristics of the ACD are described in the ACD Handbook (ACT, 1974).

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[1] Paper prepared for a 1985 American Association for Counseling and Development convention program with the same title.

[2] The authors are grateful for the help with the 1983 survey provided by Richard Lamb and Sarah Logan.

Sample

The 1973 survey was conducted in conjunction with the spring 1973 national norming of the ACD. The target population for the survey was all full-time 8th and 11th grade students enrolled in public or Catholic schools. Stratification variables included geographic region, size of community, and socioeconomic status of community. School size was also taken into account in selecting independent samples of schools enrolling 8th and 11th graders. When a school did not prefer to survey all students in the specified grade, the students that were needed to fill the school quota were randomly selected. Standardized directions for administration of survey items were provided to school personnel.

The final sample consisted of 133 schools (61 for Grade 8 and 72 for Grade 11) and 18,129 students (8,822 for Grade 8 and 9,307 for Grade 11). Weights were applied to the data for the 8th and 11th grade samples to insure that survey results would be nationally representative. Bayless, Bergsten, Lewis, and Noeth (1974) provide a detailed description of sampling and weighting procedures. Results for the 1973 survey are provided in two reports on the first Nationwide Study of Student Career Development (Noeth, Roth, & Prediger, 1975; Prediger, Roth, & Noeth, 1974).

1983 Survey

Instrument and Sample

The 1983 survey was conducted in conjunction with the spring 1983 norming of ACT's Career Planning Program (CPP). However, administrative and cost considerations placed two restrictions on the survey. First, because the norming covered students in Grades 8, 10, and 12, results for Grade 11 were not directly available. (The procedure used to address this restriction is discussed later). Second, only a subset of the original pool of ACD items could be included. Primary attention was given to items that engendered special interest when results from the 1973 survey were reported. The selected items focused on the following topics: career-related concerns (3 items); reactions to career guidance services (2 items); career planning involvement (4 items); common misconceptions (3 items); and occupational preference and certainty (2 items).

The target population for the 1983 survey was all full-time 8th, 10th, and 12th grade students enrolled in public and non-public schools. Although the 1973 target population did not include students in non-Catholic private schools, the percentage of students in such schools is small, less than 5% according to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES; 1983, 1984). Hence, exclusion of this group from the 1973 target population should not appreciably affect study results.

Within each grade level, schools were stratified by type of control (public or private) and by estimated enrollment in the grade. Within each control-enrollment stratum, proportionate stratified sampling was conducted across geographic region, and socioeconomic status of community. Of the four stratification variables used to select the 1973 sample (region, size of community, size of school, socioeconomic status), three were included in 1983. Although size of community was omitted due to lack of sampling frame data,

this does not preclude obtaining unbiased estimates of population characteristics.

Schools included in the 1983 survey were selected, independently, for Grades 8, 10, and 12. When a school did not prefer to survey all students in the specified grade, students needed to fill the school quota were randomly selected. As in 1973, standardized directions for administration were provided to school personnel.

The final sample consisted of 115 schools (46 for Grade 8, 38 for Grade 10, and 31 for Grade 12) and 15,432 students (6,342 for Grade 8, 5,322 for Grade 10, and 3,768 for Grade 12). Weights were applied to the sample data to insure that survey results would be nationally representative. Sawyer and Logan (1985) provide a detailed description of sampling and weighting procedures.

Grade 11 Estimates

Because the 1973 survey included Grades 8 and 11 whereas the 1983 survey included Grades 8, 10, and 12, direct Grade 11 comparisons for 1973 and 1983 were not possible. However, it was possible to develop estimates of Grade 11 results for 1983 from Grade 10 and 12 results. The procedure used is based on what appears to be a reasonable assumption--that there is a gradual, monotonic change from Grades 10 to 12 in the career development indicators used in this study. On the basis of this assumption, Grade 11 data were estimated from a simple average of the data for Grades 10 and 12. The same procedure, sometimes called "interpolation," is commonly used to develop national norms for educational and psychological tests.

Table 7 provides the Grade 10 and 12 percentages used to obtain the 1983 Grade 11 results. (All percentages are national estimates based on weighted sample data--although this will not be noted, subsequently, in order to simplify the presentation.) Differences in the Grade 10 and 12 percentages range in magnitude (sign ignored) from 0.2% to 16.9%, with a median of 3.6%. Given these differences, we do not believe that use of Grade 10 and 12 data to estimate Grade 11 data is likely to have an appreciable effect on the interpretation of study results. For example, Table 7 shows the largest Grade 10 and 12 difference (16.9%) was obtained for Item 3 in Table 3. Approximately 26% and 43% of the 10th and 12th graders, respectively, chose response option 3C. Even the lower bound (26%) for the Grade 11 estimate differs by 9 percentage points from the 1973 value (17%) shown in Table 3. This is a highly significant statistical difference, as explained in the next section.

1973-1983 Results

Study results are provided in Tables 1-6. Except for Table 1, which addresses career-related concerns, data for students marking more than one response for an item are not included in the report for that item. Thus, totals for the items in Tables 2-6 approximate 100%, within limitations of rounding. The wording of items used in the 1973 and 1983 studies (reproduced in the tables) was identical with the exception of minor variations described in the footnotes for Tables 1, 5, and 6.

To facilitate review of study results, only 1973-1983 changes of at least 5% are flagged in the tables and discussed in the Trend Highlights section. Taken individually, such changes are unlikely to have occurred by chance. That is, they are statistically significant at better than the .05 level for 2-tailed tests based on simple random samples. The effective sample sizes used in the significance tests--821 for Grades 8 and 11 in 1973; 384 for Grade 8 in 1983; and 768 for Grade 11 in 1983--were estimated on the basis of each study's targeted precision for estimates of population characteristics. As noted above, actual sample sizes were much larger.

Trend Highlights

Career-related Concerns

One of the major findings of the 1973 survey was the apparent receptivity of students to help with career planning. As shown by Table 1, 78% of the 1973 11th graders would have liked such help. By 1983, the figure had dropped to 71%, a statistically significant decrease. According to much of today's popular and professional literature, students in the mid-1980s are more motivated by career concerns than their counterparts in the 1970s. Why, then, a decrease in the proportion concerned with career planning? The answer may lie in the amount of help with career planning students are currently receiving.

Reactions to Career Guidance Services

One of the most striking changes shown by this 10-year study is the increase from 50% to 66% in the proportion of 11th graders who report receiving "some" or "a lot" of help with career planning (see Item 1 in Table 2). Proportionally, there has been a 32% increase over the 1973 figure. Given that approximately 3.2 million 11th graders are enrolled in the nation's schools (NCES, 1983, 1984), this trend suggests that 500,000 more are receiving at least some help with career planning than would have been by 1973's standards. Table 3 indicates something of the nature of the help received.

Career Planning Involvement

The activities listed in Table 3 represent four common ways in which schools attempt to involve students in career planning. (Unfortunately, restrictions on the 1983 survey, noted above, precluded gathering information on other types of career planning activities). Results for each of the four activities indicate an increase in career planning involvement during the 10-year study. The most striking change is in the proportion of 8th and 11th graders who reported having talked several times "with a counselor or teacher about how my goals, interests, and abilities relate to different kinds of jobs" (Item 3). The 17% increase for 11th graders was one of the largest in the study. Significantly more of the 1983 11th graders also reported that they "Took a course in school that studied several different types of jobs" (Item 4).

In general, Table 3 shows that the proportion of students involved in career planning activities increased significantly over the 10 years of the study. Since few students are likely to participate in such activities (or practice arithmetic, write essays, etc.) on their own, schools have evidently

assumed greater responsibility for helping students with career planning. Nevertheless, over 70% of the 1983 8th and 11th graders said they want still more help with "making career plans" (Table 1).

Common Misconceptions

Results for the "common-misconception" items shown in Table 4 provide one indication that more help is, indeed, needed. (Again, restrictions on the 1983 survey precluded gathering more comprehensive information on career planning knowledge.) When evaluating the Table 4 data, readers should keep in mind that if all students guessed the answer to an item (e.g., flipped a coin), approximately 50% would get the item right. In 1983, significantly more students recognized that most persons do not "remain in the same job throughout their adult lives" (Item 2). But both in 1973 and 1983, students could have done at least as well on the item (and Item 3) by guessing.

Especially noteworthy is that more than half of the 8th and 11th graders believed "The earlier one chooses his or her life's work the better" (Item 3). Experts generally agree that the initial steps in career planning should begin long before the 11th grade. But most would also maintain that students should strive to keep their career options open as long as possible. Because most persons do not remain in the same occupation throughout their adult lives (Item 2), relatively few ever "choose their life's work" once and for all.

Occupational Preferences

Perhaps the most dramatic changes over the 10-year period occurred in the occupations being considered by 8th and 11th graders. Table 6 shows the percent of students with occupational preferences in each of six occupational clusters corresponding to Holland's (1973) six occupational types. As shown by the table, the percentage of 8th graders aspiring to occupations in social, health, and personal services decreased from 31% in 1973 to 13% in 1983. There was also a large decrease (from 27% to 14%) for 11th graders. Even more dramatic is the decrease in the number of females aspiring to social, health, and personal services occupations--from 46% to 17% for 8th graders and 43% to 20% for 11th graders. Related to these changes are substantial increases in the number of girls aspiring to occupations in the traditionally male-oriented fields of business sales and management; technologies and trades; and natural, social, and medical sciences. The data do not tell us whether these increases are due to career guidance programs designed to broaden the occupational exploration of females, to changes in our culture's view of occupational sex roles, or both.

Certainty of Preference

One indicator of career development sometimes used to evaluate career counseling outcomes is the certainty with which students hold their occupational preferences. Whether more certainty is "good" depends on one's viewpoint toward the career development process. There is ample testimony in the professional literature and labor market projections that youth should "stay loose" occupationally and keep doors open as long as possible. However, if occupational choice is the "zeroing-in process" some believe it to be, one might expect that students finishing the 11th grade would be "fairly sure" of

their occupational preferences--meaning that they have given them a lot of thought.

As shown by Table 5, 73% of the 1983 11th graders are "fairly sure" or "very sure" of their "1st job choice." Especially interesting is the 10-year increase in the proportion of 8th and 11th graders answering "I am not sure at all" to the certainty question. How does one explain the contrast between more help with career planning (Tables 2 and 3) and less certainty (Table 5)? It may be that the help received made students, females especially, aware of more career options and the need to keep their options open. Also, Table 1 indicates that less certainty is not accompanied by an increase in the proportion of students wanting help with career planning. Indeed, there was a significant decrease for 11th graders. Perhaps students are learning to live with reasoned/planful uncertainty.

Concluding Statement

As noted in the introduction, judgments regarding the implications of the 10-year trends revealed by this study are left to others. Determining implications would appear to be worthwhile, given the results of a recent national survey conducted by Gallup (1985). In that survey, Gallup asked American adults to rate the importance of each of 25 goals of education on a scale of 1 to 10 where a 10 meant "a goal is the most important goal--before all others" (p. 327). Developing the ability to speak and write correctly ranked first in the number of persons assigning the highest rating (10). Developing standards of what is right and wrong ranked second. The following educational goal ranked third among the 25 included in the survey: "To develop an understanding about different kinds of jobs and careers, including their requirements and rewards" (p. 327). Tied for 6th was: "To help students make realistic plans for what they will do after high school graduation."

The results of Gallup's survey indicate that the American public wants schools to have a major role in the career development of our nation's youth. Given that the two career-related goals cited above ranked only 16th and 17th among high school teachers (Gallup, 1985), the challenge to career education/guidance professionals appears to be great.

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Table 1: Student-perceived Needs for Help With Career-Related Concerns

	Percent responding "Yes"					
	Grade 8			Grade 11		
	1973	1983	Change[a]	1973	1983	Change[a]
1. "Making career plans"	73	72		78	71	- 7
2. "Obtaining money to continue education after high school"	57	64	+ 7	56	64	+ 8
3. "Finding after-school or summer work"	73	73		67	67	

Note. The 1983 directions to students, which appeared in a unit titled "'Help Wanted' Checklist," were as follows: "Listed below are three things with which students sometimes would like help. If you would like help with any of these things, mark A for yes. Otherwise mark B for no." The 1973 directions were nearly identical. [a]Only changes of 5% or more are noted in this table and subsequent tables.

Table 2: General Reactions to Career Guidance Services

	Percent giving response					
	Grade 8			Grade 11		
	1973	1983	Change	1973	1983	Change
1. "Overall, how much help with career (educational and job) planning has your school (teachers, counselors, principal, librarian, etc.) given you?						
A. None	24	16	- 8	17	8	- 9
B. Little	31	29		32	26	- 6
C. Some	33	41	+ 8	37	46	+ 9
D. A lot"	12	14		13	20	+ 7
2. "Do you feel you can see a guidance counselor when you want to or need to?						
A. Hardly ever	16	14		13	10	
B. Usually	34	36		41	38	
C. Almost always	31	35		43	49	+ 6
D. We don't have a guidance counselor"	19	15		3	3	

Note. The 1973 and 1983 questions and response options were as quoted above. The items appeared in a unit titled "Reactions to Career Planning Activities."

Table 3

Summary of Responses to Career Planning Involvement Questions

Activities[a]	Percent giving response: Grade 8 1973	Grade 8 1983	Grade 8 Change	Grade 11 1973	Grade 11 1983	Grade 11 Change
1. "Discussed, in class, jobs related to the subject we were studying."						
A. Haven't done	33	22	-11	23	17	- 6
B. Have done once or twice	48	51		48	49	
C. Have done several times	19	27	+ 8	30	34	
2. "Read a job description from the school library or guidance office job files."						
A. Haven't done	61	55	- 6	40	33	- 7
B. Have done once or twice	28	34	+ 6	37	42	+ 5
C. Have done several times	11	11		23	25	
3. "Talked (alone or in a group) with a counselor or teacher about how my goals, interests, and abilities relate to different kinds of jobs."						
A. Haven't done	54	41	-13	40	23	-17
B. Have done once or twice	37	40		43	42	
C. Have done several times	9	19	+10	17	34	+17
4. "Took a course in school that studied several different types of jobs."						
A. Haven't done	76	70	- 6	68	50	-18
B. Have done once or twice	19	22		25	34	+ 9
C. Have done several times	5	8		7	16	+ 9

[a]In both 1973 and 1983, directions to students were as follows: ". . . indicate how often you have done each activity listed below. Use the following responses for each activity.

A. No, I haven't done this or the time I spent on this is not worth noting.

B. Yes, I have done this but only once or twice.

C. Yes, I have done this several times."

The items appeared in a unit titled "Career Planning Activities."

Table 4

Summary of Responses to Selected "Common-Misconception" Items

Item	Percent giving response: Grade 8 1973	Grade 8 1983	Grade 8 Change	Grade 11 1973	Grade 11 1983	Grade 11 Change
1. "Few women work outside of the home after marriage."						
A. True or mostly true	41	38		30	26	
*B. False or mostly false	59	62		70	74	
2. "Most persons remain in the same job throughout their adult lives."						
A. True or mostly true	66	55	-11	61	50	-11
*B. False or mostly false	34	45	+11	39	50	+11
3. "The earlier one chooses his or her life's work the better."						
A. True or mostly true	65	56	- 9	61	57	
*B. False or mostly false	35	44	+ 9	39	43	

Note. In both 1973 and 1983, directions to students were as follows: "Choose the one best answer to each question. If you are not sure of an answer, make your best guess." The items appeared in a unit titled "Career Planning Knowledge." Response option wording is as shown. An asterisk (*) indicates the response that is keyed correct.

Table 5

Certainty of Occupational Preference

Response options	Percent giving response: Grade 8 1973	Grade 8 1983	Grade 8 Change	Grade 11 1973	Grade 11 1983	Grade 11 Change
"A. I am very sure.	40	28	-12	32	29	
B. I am fairly sure.	47	47		46	44	
C. I am not sure at all."	13	26	+13	22	27	+ 5

Note. In 1973, students were asked "How sure are you that your '1st job choice' will be the same in a year?" In 1983, students were asked "How sure are you that the occupational choice you selected [first] . . . will be your first choice one year from now?"

Table 6

Distribution of First Occupational Preference by Occupational Cluster

Occupational cluster[a]	Percent with preference						
	1973			1983			
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	Total change
Grade 8							
Business sales & management (E)	7	6	6	9	12	10	
Business operations (C)	7	17	12	12	21	16	
Technologies & trades (R)	47	5	27	45	15	30	
Natural, social, & medical sciences (I)	15	15	15	14	22	18	
Creative & applied arts (A)	11	12	11	12	13	12	
Social, health, and personal services (S)	14	46	31	9	17	13	-18
Grade 11							
Business sales & management (E)	8	5	6	9	11	10	
Business operations (C)	9	22	16	10	24	18	
Technologies & trades (R)	46	7	26	50	13	31	+ 5
Natural, social, & medical sciences (I)	16	14	14	14	18	16	
Creative & applied arts (A)	11	11	11	9	13	10	
Social, health, and personal services (S)	13	43	27	7	20	14	-13

Note. Students were asked to find, on a list of occupations, an occupation "where your '1st choice' fits best" (1973) or which is "closest to the one you are considering" (1983) and then indicate its job family on the answer sheet. For purposes of analysis, each job family was assigned to one of six occupational clusters. [a]Holland's occupational type (Holland, 1973) most closely corresponding to each cluster is shown in parentheses.

Table 7

Response by 1983 10th and 12th Graders to Questions in Tables 1-5

Response Option	Percent giving response: Grade 10	Grade 12	Difference	Grade 11 estimate[a]
Table 1				
1	77.4	64.9	-12.5	71
2	63.6	65.1	1.5	64
3	74.3	60.5	-13.8	67
Table 2				
1A	9.5	5.9	- 3.6	8
1B	27.9	24.8	- 3.1	26
1C	43.8	48.2	4.4	46
1D	18.8	21.1	2.3	20
2A	10.4	8.9	- 1.5	10
2B	38.9	36.8	- 2.1	38
2C	45.8	52.4	6.6	49
2D	4.9	1.9	- 3.0	3
Table 3				
1A	17.6	16.4	- 1.2	17
1B	53.0	44.9	- 8.1	49
1C	29.4	38.6	9.2	34
2A	36.9	28.2	- 8.7	33
2B	42.7	42.1	- .6	42
2C	20.4	29.6	9.2	25
3A	30.9	15.9	-15.0	23
3B	43.2	41.3	- 1.9	42
3C	25.9	42.8	16.9	34
4A	50.3	50.1	- .2	50
4B	35.2	33.3	- 1.9	34
4C	14.4	16.6	2.2	16
Table 4				
1A	30.7	21.9	- 8.8	26
1B	69.3	78.1	8.8	74
2A	54.5	45.8	- 8.7	50
2B	45.5	54.2	8.7	50
3A	60.0	53.3	- 6.7	57
3B	39.9	46.6	6.7	43
Table 5				
A	25.1	32.8	7.7	29
B	45.7	42.4	- 3.3	44
C	29.2	24.8	- 4.4	27

[a]The Grade 11 estimate, a rounded average of the Grade 10 and 12 percents, appears in Tables 1-5.